

The INFORMANT 2015

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

KC homicides reach 42-year low

In 2014, Kansas City, Mo., experienced the lowest number of homicides it has since 1972, and Chief Darryl Forté says it was no accident. “It’s got nothing to do with luck,” he said. “We have things in place to address it.”

Kansas City had 77 homicides in 2014, compared to more than 100 each year for the last seven years. In fact, 1972 was the last time the city had fewer than 80 homicides. (The 2014 number remains subject to change, pending a few rulings from the Medical Examiner.)

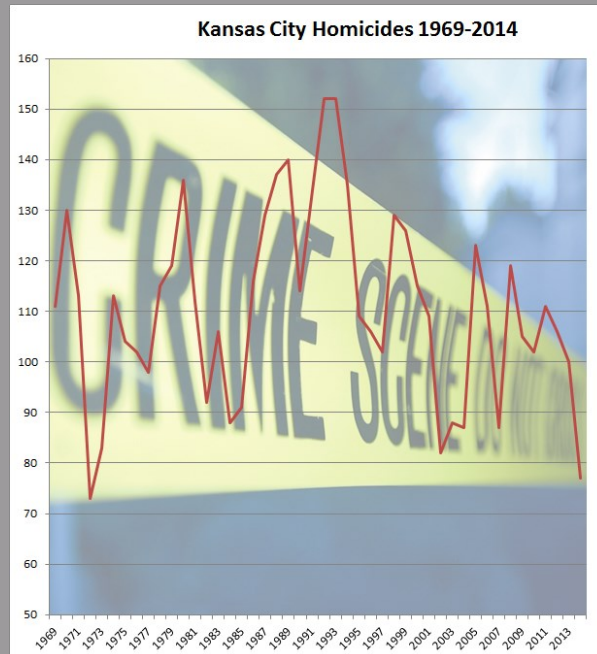
The Chief credits everything from faith leaders to the Law Enforcement Resource Center to a group of homicide victims’ mothers for making the difference.

“There are so many moving pieces to this,” he said. “No one element, entity or idea can be credited. There are so many things coming together internally and externally. And it’s not KCPD solving everything. A big part is the engagement of the community.”

Some of the systems and people that have been put into place at KCPD to reduce violent crime include the Victim Assistance Unit, increased hot spot policing, the Kansas City No Violence Alliance, the Law Enforcement Resource Center, a Violent Crimes Enforcement Unit, a community outreach specialist and collaborations with many community groups, among others.

The Victim Assistance Unit has gone a long way to ensure violent crime victims and their family members get the support they need and let the justice process take its course, reducing acts of retaliation. The detectives assigned to the unit have offered the victims crisis intervention, criminal justice information and referrals to community services for needs directly resulting from the crime such as shelter, food, clothing, grief and trauma counseling.

At the beginning of 2014, KCPD nearly doubled the amount of police personnel who work in hot spots, which are the small areas of the city where the most violent crime occurs. Every officer, detective and sergeant on the department not in an under-cover position now works six nights a year in a “hot spot.” Essentially, this means there is an extra squad of officers in East, Central and Metro Patrol divisions during their busiest nights every week.



That’s more than 14,000 hours of additional police service for residents who are most affected by violent crime.

The Kansas City No Violence Alliance (KC NoVA) also deserves credit for reducing violent crime while beefing up community support for police. KC NoVA is a partnership between KCPD, prosecutors, city government, social services and academia. This program has mapped out the relationships of everyone involved in violent crime in Kansas City over the last four years. It targets the most violent offenders – those at the epicenters of these criminal networks – for aggressive prosecution. For those less-violent offenders on the periphery of the mapped-out criminal networks, KC NoVA offers them a way out of a criminal lifestyle through support and social services.

A group called Mothers in Charge, composed of women whose children have been murdered, now sends someone to nearly

every homicide scene to support family members and help reduce retaliatory violence. The Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office likewise is sending a prosecutor to most homicides, as well, and prosecutions for first-degree murder and gun crimes were way up in 2014, according to the Kansas City Star.

Chief Forté also said community groups like Aim for Peace, Ad Hoc Group Against Crime and faith leaders who have kept calm in the areas they serve also have contributed to the reduction in homicides.

But he knows 77 homicides are still too many, and they mark 77 families who are grieving. That’s why he said he and everyone on the department will keep working to prevent violence, and it will prove that 2014 was no anomaly.

“It took a little longer than I wanted for things to change, but I definitely believe we can sustain this with our current level of resources,” Chief Forté said.

He stressed that the department must maintain its current sworn and non-sworn staffing levels to continue making strides because everyone contributed to the reduced violence in some way.

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Site for new North Patrol selected

The site of the building that soon will replace KCPD's iconic "Bumblebee" station has been selected.

The new North Patrol Division will be at the corner of N.W. Prairie View and Vienna roads, which is just to the south of the 112th Street exit on the west side of Interstate 29. Major Sharon Laningham of the Construction Division said the project is in the design phase now, and construction should begin in the fall of this year and last about a year and a half.

The site was chosen for many reasons, Major Laningham said. It offers multiple points of access with little worry of traffic congestion, and some City Council members pushed for it to be in Platte County. But she said the most attractive part about it is the price, which is pretty much \$0.

The land is part of Kansas City International Airport and therefore already owned by the city. It's currently used as farm land. Fire Station No. 16 is adjacent, as is the former TWA Overhaul Base.

The new North Patrol station is the last project to be funded by the Public Safety Sales Tax that voters renewed in 2010. That tax has paid for new stations in Shoal Creek, Metro and South patrol divisions, as well as the Police Academy, Headquarters renovation, and Special Operations and Traffic divisions' facilities. The new East Patrol Division and Crime Lab are under construction.

The current black-and-yellow North Patrol building overlooking 169 Highway was constructed in 1976. North Patrol Major Roger Lewis said Retired Chief Larry Joiner told him he was assigned at North Patrol when it opened almost 40 years ago, and 15 officers worked there. There are now 95 officers and non-sworn staff. That makes for very tight quarters.

Architecturally, Major Laningham said the building has many other deficiencies. The flooring is at the end of its life, the lighting is poor, there's no community meeting space, the detention facilities are very far away from the

desk sergeant and law enforcement employees, and it's not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Then there are the pest issues.

"Three times, snakes have dropped down from the ceiling into the building," she said.

She and Major Lewis both cited the parking situation as a major concern for both officers and residents. North Patrol is the only police station in Kansas City in which officers and station visitors park in the same lot. It's a safety issue for officers and a convenience issue for visitors who have difficulty finding a spot.

In addition to separated parking, Major Lewis said what

he's most looking forward to about the new station is having community meeting space, enhanced security for employees, improved technology, and having commanders' offices more accessible at the front of the station. Officers will appreciate a new state-of-



the-art workout facility and break room with food preparation area.

Major Lewis said he's heard from a few residents who are worried that the station will be moving farther northwest.

"My answer is that I wouldn't expect response time to increase because we work from the street," he said. "We don't dispatch from the station."

Other members of the public have expressed concern about the "Bumblebee's" fate, citing it as an iconic building. Major Laningham said City officials have not yet determined what will happen to it.

Major Lewis said the new station will be situated in the place where the city is growing. A 15,000-acre area called Twin Creeks located to the east of KCI Airport is in the beginning phases of development and is expected to grow the population of Platte County and Kansas City, Mo., by 75,000 people in 20 years, according to the Platte County Economic Development Council. The new North Patrol Division will be ready to serve them.

New computer lab donated to PAL

As of Friday, December 19, 2014, the Police Athletic League (PAL) now is able to provide opportunities to enhance and prepare its youth for careers in the 21st century.

Thanks to the GTECH After School Advantage program and State Senator Kiki Curls, the PAL Center has a new \$16,000 computer lab.

“Not all kids are into sports, so they can now go straight to the lab to play educational games,” PAL Sergeant Skip Cox said. “It’s a monumental moment for PAL to have an up-and-running computer lab that 15 kids can get on at a time. It provides underprivileged children with access to modern technology.”

Senator Curls heard about PAL’s need for a computer lab and knew about what GTECH had done for similar organizations in Missouri. She coordinated the donation.

GTECH is the Missouri Lottery’s computer gaming contract service provider. The Missouri Lottery donates its proceeds to education. The GTECH After School Advantage program provides educational opportunities to children by donating new computers, printers, software, furniture, and volunteer hours to non-profit organizations that sponsor after-school programs. PAL is the ninth GTECH After School Advantage Computer Lab in Mis-

souri and the 248th that GTECH has built since the worldwide program began in 1999.

The PAL lab features 15 desktop computers, a smart board, a printer, chairs, Microsoft Office software, assorted educational software, and room decor.

The new lab was designed to help the PAL engage members in homework, creative thinking, and study help. The technology is available five days a week during the school year, as well as during the summer.

“The Police Athletic League of Kansas City is an exemplary long-standing organization in the community that serves our youth,” Sen-

ator Curls said. “It’s a perfect opportunity to bridge the gap between our youth and law enforcement.

The mission of the PAL of Kansas City is to offer youth the opportunity to interact with police officers in a positive setting while participating in cultural, mentoring, and sports programs. The goal of the organization is to reduce youth-related crime and build self-esteem by creating programming in academics, arts, cultural activities, sporting activities, and life skills enrichment.

Sergeant Cox said PAL complements KCPD’s crime-fighting efforts well, proactively building positive relationships with at-risk youth.



Chief Forté honored with award for peace

After a year of turmoil and unrest involving police departments nationwide, Chief Darryl Forté received a prestigious award for peace at the 29th Annual World Peace Meditation Interfaith Gathering on New Year’s Eve at the Rime Buddhist Center. About 250 people from more than 15 faith traditions were represented at the event, and they gave Chief Forté a standing ovation when he was presented with the Bodhisattva Award. Bodhisattva represents the highest Buddhist ideal of an enlightened person who works for the benefit of others. According to a Kansas City Star article, Lama Chuck Stanford said at the gathering that Forté was selected for the award because he has promoted cultural diversity, built trust, reduced violent crime, aided victims and used passion and wisdom to achieve those goals.



Photo courtesy Caitlin Cress/KCPT

Upcoming Events

January 22
Awards Ceremony

January 29
**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting
(Headquarters)**

January 30
**Crime Stoppers Annual
Breakfast**

January 31
Polar Plunge

February 24
**Board of Police
Commissioners Meeting
(Headquarters)**

The Informant is a publication of
KCPD's Media Unit
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www.kcpd.org

Officially Speaking

Awards

Medal of Valor

Officer Kevin Colhour
Officer Megan Gates

Crisis Intervention Team Award

Officer Michael Bowen

Certificate of Commendation

Detective Margaret McGuire

Life-Saving Award

Officer Nicole Anderson

Retirements

Officer Frank Disciacca
Officer Mark Carrel
Reserve Officer Sharyn Mills
Administrative Assistant Rose
Pierce

Obituaries

Retired Detective Richard Otte
Retired Officer Gordon Rowland
Retired Major Francis Tye

The mission of the Kansas City
Missouri Police Department
is to protect and serve with
professionalism, honor
and integrity.